

Going to Work Series

Keeping a Job – So You Got the Job, Now What?

Easter H. Tucker
Family and Consumer
Sciences Specialist

When you finally get a job, there are certain things that you can do to keep the job. Make your work as valuable as possible to the employer. This will allow the supervisor to see you as an important part of the work force. It is also important to try to produce the best work you possibly can. This can be done by following several simple rules.

- **Pay attention to quality.** Check your work often to be sure it is right.
- **Finish work on time!** Meet scheduled deadlines, or even finish early.
- **Be able to get the job done without constant supervision.** This means you should show a little independence and not bother your supervisor with constant questions regarding how to do something. To avoid this, it is important to learn to read manuals and to look things up on your own. If you can't find the information you need, go to your co-workers. Ask your supervisor for help if you are still confused.
- **Be prepared to handle problems.** Don't take criticism personally. Listen carefully to the suggestions that have been made to improve your work

quality, then make the needed changes. Remember, it is your work that is being criticized, not you.

- **Keep your feelings under control.** All of us may lose our patience occasionally, but it's important to stay in control. Don't become nervous, cry, hit or lose your temper.

Check to see what you have learned about keeping a job. Answer the following questions.

1. Roger works at a clothing store, and he hates to take inventory. He rarely finishes inventory on time. When he's involved in inventory, he seems to take his frustration out on the customers and loses his patience easily. What can Roger do to be a better employee?

2. Betty constantly asks her boss how something should be done or what needs to be done. She has been working four months. How can Betty change to

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become more independent and take more responsibility?

3. Jason takes careful notes when his supervisor talks to him about the areas in his performance that need improvement. He never makes direct eye contact. Jason doesn't interrupt, and he never says a word. Before submitting new work, he refers to his notes to avoid making the same mistake twice. He checks his work carefully before handing it in on time. If Jason is ever fired, what will probably be the cause? How can Jason become more confident?

Because being a good employee is important, another skill that will help you keep a job and do it well is to control your stress. Job burnout is something all of us need to try to avoid, if possible. Job burnout involves too much stress over a period of time and usually occurs following a loss of enthusiasm and drive. The newness you once felt about your job may have fizzled out. Stress levels will increase, so learn ways to keep stress at levels that let you stay productive. Check your stress levels on a regular basis so you can stop burnout before it begins.

These are signs that job burnout is happening. Here are some signs of job-related stress.

- Not wanting to go to work
- A sense of failure
- Anger and resentment
- Guilt and blame
- Feeling discouraged
- Negative attitude
- Isolating yourself from others

- Feeling tired and exhausted all day
- Frequent clock watching
- Postponing contact with others
- Stereotyping others
- Inability to concentrate
- Feeling trapped
- Problems sleeping
- Frequent headaches or upset stomach
- Resistance to change
- Unnecessary worry
- Conflict with family and co-workers
- High absenteeism
- Use of alcohol and/or drugs to cope

Work stress has many causes. Here are some of those causes.

- Work overload
- Threats to job security
- Time pressures and deadlines
- Not enough to do
- Boredom
- Dead-end-job stress
- Not getting enough rest

Being aware of the stress around you will give you a better grasp on how to deal with problems in a realistic way. The first step in treating a case of burnout is to communicate to your supervisor or boss about how you are feeling and why. It may be helpful to try to renew some of that old drive and energy you once had. This can be done by looking for new ideas, thinking about changes that will make you more productive, and learning new things as often as possible. The boredom you feel will lessen, and you will feel better about your job and yourself. Then you will be ready to work hard again.

Prevention of stress will decrease the possibility of burnout occurring in the first place. It is important to take care of yourself. Here are ways to overcome stress:

- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly and eat right.
- Take regular vacations.
- Be realistic about your worries. If you cannot do anything about a problem, let it go!

- Organize your life. Clean up yourself, your house, your car and your work area.
- Take a ten-minute break from routine work every hour. Do chores that require less concentration.
- Talk to others about how you feel. They may have the same problems.
- Restore your faith and focus on the good things that are happening to you.

If you try your best in everything you do, your work will show it. Keep in mind the six biggest turn-ons at work – pride, participation, teamwork, self-respect, learning and recognition. These encourage positive feelings, help remove stress, and give you something to feel good about every day. The supervisor will see you as someone who is valuable. When stress levels are maintained at reasonable levels, job burnout will be less likely to happen. You will be productive and more likely to keep your job.

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This material was prepared by Dorothy Taylor, Extension family life specialist, The Texas A&M University System, and Tracey R. Jones, graduate assistants, Minority Job Skills Project, The Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University, and is recommended to Arkansans by Easter H. Tucker, family and consumer sciences specialist, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, Little Rock, Arkansas.

EASTER H. TUCKER is family and consumer sciences specialist with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, Little Rock.

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